

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TUNIS 00216 111816Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04
SIL-01 /082 W
-----119165 111902Z /50

P 111614Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9528
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 0216

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB PGOV TS
SUBJ: GERMAN EMBASSY ASSESSMENT OF CHANGES IN
TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT

1. DEPARTMENT MAY BE INTERESTED WEST GERMAN EMBASSY
ASSESSMENT OF DECEMBER 26 CHANGES IN TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT.
RELATIONS BETWEEN WEST GERMAN EMBASSY AND FORMER MINISTER
OF INTERIOR BELKHODJA, WHOSE DISMISSAL PRECIPITATED OTHER
RESIGNATIONS AND DISMISSALS, WERE EXTREMELY CLOSE. GERMAN
CHARGE HACH MADE FOLLOWING POINTS OF INTEREST IN DISCUSSION
WITH DCM.

2. REPLACEMENT OF NUMBER OF KEY MINISTERS WAS ALMOST CER-
TAINLY NOT LONG PLANNED, AS PUBLICLY CLAIMED BY PRIME
MINISTER NOUIRAM IT IS QUITE APPARENT THAT SOME DIFFICULTY
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PAGE 02 TUNIS 00216 111816Z

WAS EXPERIENCED IN FINDING QUALIFIED CANDIDATES WHO
WOULD ACCEPT CABINET POSTS.

3. "CRISIS" APPARENTLY BROUGHT ABOUT BY BELKHODJA'S
REFUSAL TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST TRADE UNIONS, LEAVING
PRIME MINISTER IN IMPOSSIBLE POSITION OF CONFRONTING
UGTT WITHOUT BACKING OF SECURITY FORCES. BELKHODJA MUST

HAVE THOUGHT THAT BE COULD STAND ASIDE AND THAT WHEN NOUIRA UNABLE TO HANDLE SITUATION PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA WOULD BE OBLIGED TO TURN TO HIM. NOUIRA HAD LITTLE CHOICE BUT TO ACT AS HE DID IF HE WISHED TO REMAIN IN OFFICE.

4. IF UGTT NOW BACKS DOWN, NOUIRA HAS WON THE DAY; IF NOT, FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT. IT CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT MAIN OPPONENT OF RESHUFFLED GOVERNMENT WILL BE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT. UNCERTAIN WHETHER BELKHODJA AND OTHER RESIGNED/DISMISSED MINISTERS HAVE ANY IMMEDIATE POLITICAL FUTURE. UNLIKELY OPPOSITION "LIBERALS" WILL PLAY ANY SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN WHAT HAPPENS NEXT.

5. OBVIOUS LOSER IS PRESIDENT'S WIFE WASSILA, WHOSE FAVORITES ARE NOW OUT OF POWER. HOWEVER, IT SHOULD NOT BE ASSUMED THAT HABIB BOURGUIBA, JR. WILL PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN FUTURE OR, INDEED, STAY IN GOVERNMENT FOR LONG. IT MAY BE THAT HIS ROLE MAINLY TO EMPHASIZE CONTINUITY AND CLOSE TIES OF PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA WITH PALACE.

6. NEW GOVERNMENT MUCH MORE HOMOGENEOUS. WHILE CHANGE REPRESENTS SHIFT TO THE RIGHT, NOUIRA WILL, IF POSSIBLE, AVOID TAKING ACTIONS THAT WILL RESULT IN GOT BEING LABELED "HARD LINE" OR "REACTIONARY." IT WILL BE

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PAGE 03 TUNIS 00216 111816Z

WORTH WATCHING HOW MINISTRY OF INTERIOR NOW OPERATES WITH MINISTER OF DEFENSE FARHAT'S MAN IN KEY POSITION. SOME RISK EXISTS OF LOSS OF CIVILIAN CONTROL OVER SECURITY FUNCTION. GERMAN EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS THAT IN LAST FEW DAYS POLICE HAVE BEGUN TO ARREST "AGITATORS" IN LEFT WING OF TUNISIAN LABOR MOVEMENT.
MULCAHY

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